



Sgt. Joseph A. Lee

Petty Officer 1st Class Mack Memea (left) stands with his family, (from left) daughters Desiree and Anuhea, sons Michael and Marcus, and wife, Terry. Michael and Desiree both received national recognition for their athletic achievements this past summer, for which their father, a Sailor assigned to Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 24, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, says he couldn't be more proud.

Going ... going ... gone!

Memeas score second champ in one summer

Sgt. Joseph A. Lee
Sports Editor

It's every father's dream to have his child win a national championship, but for Petty Officer 1st Class Mack Memea of Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 24, this dream became a reality twice in one summer. On Aug. 28 his son, catcher Michael Memea, hit the title-winning home run in the seventh inning of the Little League World Series final to give the West Oahu team from Ewa Beach, Hawaii, a 7-6 victory over Willemstad, Curacao.

Earlier in the summer, Memea's daughter, Desiree, took the national title in high school wrestling, in Fargo, N.D. Just when Memea began to step down from cloud nine to eight, his son, Michael, began his journey to the Little League World Series. After chasing the team across America and watching his son hit the game-winning home run, Memea again finds himself in the media spotlight discussing his child's national championship performance.

"I couldn't be more proud," said Memea of his national champion son and daughter. "It was a real dream come true the first time around, in June, with my daughter winning



Photo Courtesy of Joe Bouch

Michael Memea, hits a three-run homer in the United States Championship tournament for a win over the Southeast team from Florida, Aug. 22. The victory added to the team's advancement into the semifinals, and the single-elimination portion of the Little League World Series tournament.

the nationals in wrestling, and now that my son is a national champion, I have to be the most proud father on the face of the planet."

The team from West Oahu became the first Hawaii team to capture the youth baseball crown by rallying to dethrone the 2004 champions, and Memea, a native of Samoa and near-lifelong resident of West Oahu, was in attendance to support his son throughout the entire ride.

"ESPN called them the sluggers," said Memea of his son and fellow West Oahu teammates. "They went undefeated during the regular season, and though we got to the regionals in California, I really didn't know what to expect. I didn't know how good our team really was until they kept clubbing in home runs."

With the tournament high of 10 home runs entering the LLWS, Memea and the West Oahu team bashed through the regionals, defeating Oregon, 17-1, Idaho 16-5, Montana 22-7 and Alaska 10-0, and

won the regional title over Idaho in another blowout, 12-1. Memea, on leave to watch his son play in the regionals, immediately called back to his unit in Hawaii for an extension of his leave.

"When we won the regionals, all of the other parents and I began scrounging for tickets to Pennsylvania," said Memea. "I had to get the whole family there, it was a once in a lifetime dream — I felt like a little kid."

The team from West Oahu, now sporting Northwest Region uniforms, had to become United States champions before they could have a shot at the LLWS title. The sluggers from Ewa Beach defeated Pennsylvania, 7-1, with a three-run homer by Memea, they defeated Iowa, 7-3, Florida, 10-0, Louisiana, 2-0 and finally Southern California team, Rancho Buena Vista, Calif., 6-1 to become U.S. champs.

"We had great seats to the game, and all of us parents sat together — rooting our children on," said Memea. "Most of us were just amazed that we had defeated the rest of the teams with so much ease. We had no idea what to expect from Curacao, and most of us got pretty nervous at the start of the game, when we fell behind for the first time this season."

Down 3-1 in the third inning after a confusing play, West Oahu quickly closed the gap with its big bats, erasing any memories of a possible loss, but it was made clear that Curacao was not going to go out without a fight.

"Everyone kept their composure pretty well," said Memea who was watching the game intensely from just behind the dugout. "There were a couple bad calls, but the coaching staff kept everyone focused on regaining their composure."

Michael Memea (right), slides into home, beating the throw to score a run in the United States Championship game against Southern California.



Photo Courtesy of Little League International — Caroline Connolley

In the fifth, Curacao's Sorick Liberia smashed a two-run homer and Darren Seferina added a solo homer to give Curacao a 6-3 lead. But in the sixth inning, just three outs from defending the crown, the international champions faltered. With runners on second and third and nobody out, West Oahu's Vonn Feao scored from third on a bunt base hit by Ty Tirpak, and Zachary Rosete hit an RBI single to left field to close the gap to 6-5.

Three batters later, Alakai Aglipay bounced one to second that looked like it could be turned for a double play, but he beat the throw, scoring Rosete for the tying run. As the game went into extra innings, Ewa Beach pitcher Vonn Feao was able to hold off Curacao in the top of the seventh, and Memea knew his son would lead off the bottom of the inning.

"I was a little nervous for him," said Memea, "because he hadn't been connecting with the ball very well early in the game. I wasn't too worried though, because I knew even if Michael got out, the batters behind him would finish the job."

Then it happened — on a three-two pitch to Memea, he let one soar.

"As it started to climb, I immediately got misty-eyed," said Memea as he watched his son's reaction. "As soon as I knew it was going over, I was bawlin'. I met my son at the edge of the field to connect fist-to-fist — father to son. 'I was so proud at that moment, nothing could bring me down.'"

Scheduled to retire from the Navy in November, Memea's leave extension forced him to postpone retirement for a month longer.

"It was worth every minute," said Memea. "If you saw me in the stands at the game, I was the guy holding the sign that read, 'Thank you MALS-24 for extending my leave.'"

Memea had a deal with his son throughout the season this year: \$20 per home run, \$100 per grand slam — but a lead-off home run to win the Little League World Series? Priceless.

A West Oahu Little Leaguer and the crowd explode after Michael Memea hit the title-winning home run in the seventh inning of the Little League World Series final to give the West Oahu team from Ewa Beach, Hawaii, a 7-6 victory over the defending champions from Willemstad, Curacao.



Photo Courtesy of Little League International — Caroline Connolley